



Underground Storage Tanks

What are underground storage tanks?

- Underground storage tanks (UST) are containers used to hold large quantities of liquids underground.
- They are usually made of steel, but they can be made of other materials such as fiberglass.
- These tanks have piping and mechanisms for filling and removing the material stored in them.
- About 95 percent of all USTs store petroleum products such as gasoline or oil but they may also hold industrial chemicals and food products.

What happens when a UST leaks?

- Sometimes tanks will leak because of corrosion of the tank or piping, equipment failure, improper installation or other accidental spills. When a tank leak is reported, it enters the Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST) program.
- These spills can contaminate the soil or ground water. Occasionally, the spilled product finds its way to surface water, sewers or private drinking water wells. It can even cause vapors in a home.
- Once a release is discovered, the owner and/or operator of the tank must report the release, mitigate any immediate threats, investigate the extent of contamination in the soil and ground water and implement a plan to clean up the contamination.

What is IDEM doing to prevent leaks and to address any leaking tanks?

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management regulates USTs that contain petroleum products and industrial chemicals in excess of 110 gallons. These present the greatest threat to human health and the environment.
- To prevent future problems, all operational tanks must meet certain standards for rust protection, leak detection, spill and overfill prevention or be closed. IDEM must be notified when new tanks, which must meet strict design and operating standards, are installed.
- IDEM inspects new and existing tank systems to ensure compliance with relevant laws.
- When product is detected outside the tank or the tank exhibits unusual operating conditions, tank owners and operators must report suspected and confirmed releases to IDEM and stop the leak within 24 hours. To report a release, owners and operators must call IDEM at (317) 232-8900 or (800) 451-6027 during normal business hours or at the 24-hour spill line at (317) 233-7745 or (888) 233-7745. Owners and operators may also report releases via fax at (317) 234-0428 or via e-mail at LeakingUST@dem.state.in.us.
- Owners and operators must investigate the release to determine the extent of the contamination in soil and ground water, develop a plan to clean up the release and implement the plan.

What can I do?

- Call your local fire department if you smell gas or any chemical odor in your home. Then open the windows and leave the house. Avoid using any item that may produce a spark or flame.
- Call IDEM's spill line if there is an oil sheen or petroleum smell or taste in your drinking water, or if you see or suspect a spill.
- Call your county health department if you want to have your drinking water tested for possible petroleum contamination. They can tell you how to take samples and may help you get free or low-cost water testing from the state department of health.

Where can I get more information?

Call IDEM's Leaking Underground Storage Tank Section at (317) 232-8900 or reach them toll free at (800) 451-6027 and ask for extension 2-8900. You may also visit the LUST Web site at www.IN.gov/idem/land/lust.